

Joseph L. Thomas
Director
(302) 855-7801 Office
(302) 855-7805 Fax
(302) 855-7803 Office After Hours
(302) 855-7800 Fax After Hours



Sussex County
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER
21911 RUDDER LANE
P.O. BOX 589
GEORGETOWN, DE 19947

Evacuation of Sussex County continues as Hurricane Irene steams toward coast

*People within ¾-miles of major waterways should remain on the
move to get out of dangerous storm's path*

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

**2000 Hours, Friday
Aug. 26, 2011**

The evacuation of Sussex County's most vulnerable areas is continuing this Friday evening as Hurricane Irene, now a slightly weaker but still very dangerous storm, remains on a collision course with the eastern United States, including Sussex County and the rest of Delaware.

Evacuation routes, including Del. Route 1, US 113, US 13 and the east-west arteries, have been busy throughout the day with residents and visitors making their way out of at-risk areas, particularly along the Atlantic and Delaware Bay coastlines. Traffic appears to be flowing smoothly at this hour, with the evacuation set to last into Saturday morning.

"If there is any silver lining in what has otherwise been some rather bleak news, it's that the public appears to be taking the threat very seriously," said Joseph L. Thomas, director of the Sussex County Emergency Operations Center. "We think they've received the message loud and clear."

Gov. Jack Markell has ordered that everyone be out of the identified evacuation zone by 9 a.m. Saturday. In Sussex, the zone includes the communities of Slaughter Beach, Prime Hook, Broadkill Beach, Long Neck and Oak Orchard, as well along the Del. Route 1 corridor, including the areas in and around Lewes Beach, Henlopen Acres, Rehoboth Beach, Dewey Beach, North Bethany, Bethany Beach, South Bethany and Fenwick Island. This applies to areas that historically are flood-prone. A map of the evacuation zone is posted on the County website, at www.sussexcountyde.gov.

Continued

Meantime, Sussex County and State emergency planners have designated three shelters for those evacuating coastal communities and flood-prone areas in advance of Hurricane Irene. The shelters are now open to the public.

As capacity is limited, these shelters should be used as a means of last resort. Residents and visitors evacuating from at-risk areas are encouraged to seek refuge with family or friends elsewhere, if possible. The shelters are:

Beacon Middle School
19482 John J. Williams
Highway
Lewes, DE

Indian River H. S.
29772 Armory Road
Dagsboro, DE
(Pets Accepted)

Milford High School
1019 N. Walnut St.
Milford, DE
(Pets Accepted)

Those visiting a shelter should remember to take adequate clothing, medications, sleeping materials, and food for themselves, their families and/or their pets (where accepted). Shelters will be staffed by the American Red Cross of the Delmarva Peninsula (www.redcrossdelmarva.org).

A hurricane warning remains in effect for Sussex County. Forecasters do not expect Sussex County to sustain a direct hit from the eye of the storm, with the center expected to pass just to the east, perhaps by about 20 or 30 miles. However, winds of at least 75 mph or more are expected across the county throughout the event, with gusts to 100 mph possible. The storm is expected to be at its peak between midnight Saturday and 9 a.m. Sunday.

Meantime, the storm is forecast to create a surge of 3 to 6 feet of water along the oceanfront, Delaware Bay and Inland Bays, with lesser surge amounts along Chesapeake Bay tributaries, including the Nanticoke River. The storm is also expected to kick up waves of 12 to 16 feet in the surf zone, and dump as much as 7 to 10 inches of rain.

The Sussex County EOC encourages residents and visitors to continue monitoring the tropics and conditions as they deteriorate. For updates, stay tuned to local media, the Sussex County EOC website at www.sussexcountycle.gov/services/storm, and the County's Twitter feeds at www.twitter.com/sussex_pio and www.twitter.com/sussexctycle_eoc. The public should also monitor www.nws.noaa.gov/er/phi and www.deldot.gov for the latest weather and traffic updates.

For more information, members of the public can call the Sussex County EOC's storm line at (302) 856-7366.

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Media calls should be directed to EOC spokeswoman Debra Jones at (302) 855-7801 or Sussex County Chief of Public Information Chip Guy at (302) 858-0505.